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Text of November 25, 1998 letter to Portuguese Foreign Minister Jaime Gama from U.S. Secretary of State Madeline Albright

Dear Jaime:

I would like to thank you for your letter of November 11 1998. I also believe that improving the human rights situation in East Timor and peacefully resolving its status is an urgent and important matter. The United States respects and applauds the flexible approach Portugal and Indonesia have taken in their negotiations in New York under the auspices of the United Nations.

We continue to view the Marker talks as offering the best hope for reaching an enduring resolution on East Timor acceptable to all parties. We will continue to support these negotiations and reiterate to Indonesia the importance of implementing agreed confidence building measures, including its pledge to reduce overall troop levels. We will continue to call for the release of prisoners of conscience, including Xanana Gusmao. We also agree that it would be in the interest of the Indonesian government to make the situation on the ground more transparent.

I thank you again for your efforts to solve the problems in East Timor.

With highest regards,

Madeleine K. Aibright